

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SENV, OECD

SUBJECT: OECD ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE -- APRIL 24-26 PLENARY

1. ONE OF THE CURRENT PROJECTS UNDER THE OECD ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE IS "STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN OECD COUNTRIES".
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A FINAL REPORT, AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS EMANATING FROM THIS PROJECT WILL FORM PART OF THE FOUNDATION FOR AN EARLY 1979 MEETING OF OECD ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS. FOR THAT REASON ALONE, THE PROJECT IS IMPORTANT. HOWEVER, IT ALSO HAS POTENTIAL VALUE REACHING INTO THE FUTURE IF IT RESULTS IN MEANINGFUL CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION OF KEY LONGER RANGE ISSUES.

2. IN THE HOPES OF HELPING DEVELOP SOME CLEAR ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE GUIDANCE FOR THE PROJECT, WHICH IS STILL IN A MALLEABLE STATE, THE U.S. PLANS TO CIRCULATE AND DISCUSS A COMMITTEE ROOM DOCUMENT AT THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE SESSION. THE TEXT OF THE PLANNED DOCUMENT IS CONTAINED IN PARAS 6-9.

3. ADDRESSEE POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO PASS ADVANCE COPIES OF THE TEXT TO HOST OFFICIALS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING THE UPCOMING OECD ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING AND, DRAWING ON PARAS 4 AND 5 BELOW, EXPLAIN OUR PURPOSE IN CIRCULATING

THE PAPER AND SEEK THEIR SUPPORT FOR COMMITTEE GUIDANCE TO THE EXPERTS GROUP WORKING ON THE PROJECT. U.S. MISSION OECD IS REQUESTED TO ASK THE SECRETARIAT TO PREPARE PARAS 6-9 AS A ROOM DOCUMENT IN RELATION TO AGENDA ITEM 11 OF THE APRIL 24-26 MEETING.

4. THE REPORT ON MEASURING THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT SHOULD BE PREPARED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT FOCUSES ON THE ISSUES THAT ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST AND CONCERN TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, OR THE REPORT WILL NOT BE USED. THE EXPERTS GROUP WAS UNABLE AT ITS LAST MEETING IN NOVEMBER TO IDENTIFY AND SPECIFY A LIST OF ISSUES OR PROBLEMS WHICH SHOULD BE COVERED IN THIS FIRST REPORT. IT IS THEREFORE UNCLASSIFIED

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UP TO THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE THAT GUIDANCE AND SET PRIORITIES.

5. OUR SECOND PURPOSE IN PREPARING THIS ROOM DOCUMENT IS TO TRY TO GET THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER JUST HOW ITS MEMBERS WILL USE THE REPORT IN PREPARING A POSSIBLE FUTURE WORK AGENDA. WHAT LESSONS IS THIS EXPENSIVE AND TIME-CONSUMING PROCEDURE TEACHING? CAN THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN PREPARING SUCH A REPORT BE TRANSLATED INTO A COHERENT WORK PLAN AND, WITH IT, GUIDE THE FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE - OR INDIVIDUAL, INTERESTED MEMBERS? NOW IS THE TIME TO RAISE THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE THE REPORT IS SET IN CONCRETE AND BEFORE ITS DRAFT CONCLUSIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTERS ARE FORMULATED.

6. PROSPECTS AND POLICIES FOR ASSESSING THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

7. AT THE REQUEST OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, A GROUP OF EXPERTS IS CURRENTLY PREPARING A REPORT ON THE "STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN OECD COUNTRIES" FOR THE 1979 MINISTERIAL MEETING. THIS REPORT, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND TO

BE PREPARED AT OECD, IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONDITIONS AND TRENDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGHOUT ALL MEMBER COUNTRIES AND SO PROVIDE, IN PART, A GUIDE FOR THE FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE.

8. THE GROUP OF EXPERTS, HOWEVER, CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO WORK IN A VACUUM. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE TO SUGGEST AND PROPOSE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT. IT IS THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMITTEE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE FURTHER GUIDANCE TO THE EXPERT GROUP AND TO THE DIRECTORATE.

A. THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT ON THE "STATE OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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ENVIRONMENT IN OECD COUNTRIES SHOULD BE BASED, TO THE DEGREE POSSIBLE, ON CURRENTLY AVAILABLE DATA: STATISTICAL SERIES, SPECIAL ANALYSES, AND RESEARCH. TABLES COLLECTED FROM THE MEMBER COUNTRIES, USING THE QUESTIONNAIRE (ENV/SE 77.4), SHOULD BE USED WHENEVER POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE. THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT AS OUTLINED IN THE DOCUMENT (ENV/SE 77.6) IS APPROPRIATE FOR PREPARING A SUMMARY REPORT. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE REPORT GIVE PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE SECTIONS DEALING WITH VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE ENVIRONMENT: AIR, WATER, LAND, NOISE, TOXIC SUBSTANCES, WASTES, AND WILDLIFE; AND, TO HOW VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS WITHIN SOCIETY SHOULD RESPOND WITH POLICIES FOR PREVENTION, ENHANCEMENT, AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY MANY AREAS FOR WHICH DATA ARE INCOMPLETE, POORLY ANALYZED, OR JUST NOT EXISTENT. IN SUCH CASES, THE BEST JUDGMENT OF THE ANALYSTS IS REQUIRED.

B. IN ORDER TO TAP FULLY THE RESOURCES WHICH HAVE BEEN GATHERED, AND PROVIDE MEMBER COUNTRIES AND THE COMMITTEE WITH SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING IMPORTANT UNRESOLVED ISSUES WHICH MIGHT BE ADDRESSED IN THE FUTURE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT A SECTION OF THE REPORT BE DEVOTED TO EVALUATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN PREPARING THE REPORT. THREE PROBLEMS IN PARTICULAR APPEAR OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE: IDENTIFYING ISSUES, ANALYZING TRENDS, AND DEVELOPING STATISTICS.

I) IS THERE AGREEMENT AND A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLICY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS THAT AN ASSESSMENT OF "THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT" SHOULD ADDRESS; E.G. THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT SHOULD FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE VERSUS THE UNCLASSIFIED

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PHYSICAL STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE DEGREE TO WHICH IT SHOULD BE RELATED TO PARTICULAR POLICY DECISIONS OR EVEN MORE SPECIFICALLY TO EXPENDITURES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES? TO THE EXTENT THERE IS NOT AGREEMENT, WHAT ARE THE RANGE OF OPTIONS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR PURPOSES OF DEVELOPING FUTURE REPORTS?

II) SECOND, WHAT KINDS OF ANALYSES WERE PERFORMED OR USED? WAS THERE A SINGULARLY APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING TRENDS AND CONDITIONS? ARE AVAILABLE MODELS AND METHODS SUFFICIENT, OR SHOULD NEW ONES BE DEVELOPED? WHAT KINDS OF ANALYSES SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF FUTURE REPORTS?

III) THIRD, WHAT INDICATORS WERE AVAILABLE AND USEFUL TO

ASSESS THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, TO ADDRESS THE POLICY ISSUES? DO WE HAVE THE INDICATORS TO HELP US MAKE THOSE JUDGMENTS WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF CERTAINTY? IF NOT, WHAT ARE THE RANGE OF OPTIONS (I.E., WHAT TYPE, OR COMBINATION OF TYPES, IS APPROPRIATE)? WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES IN REACHING A CONSENSUS? WHAT DATA ARE AVAILABLE AND USEFUL (TO SUPPORT THE INDICATORS) AND WHAT DATA WERE NOT AVAILABLE AND WHY? WHAT DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED AND ANALYZED IN THE FUTURE?

9. WITH ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE, THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE WOULD THEN BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO BEGIN TO DECIDE ON POSSIBLE FUTURE WORK, BE IT FOCUSED ON POLICY ISSUES, STATISTICAL ISSUES, ANALYTICAL ISSUES OR SOME COMBINATION. VANCE

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